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FAR FIELDS
R.D.5
TUAKAU 2695

28th February 2017

Councillor Alan Livingston O12M
Chairman
Waikato Regional Council.

Dear Alan,

This is a copy of my submission
to Mr Payne for your information.

With kind regards,

John Handers.

Far Fields

R.D.5 Tuakau 2695

28th February 2017

Mr V R J Payne

Chief Executive

Waikato Regional Council

Dear Sir

THIS SUBMISSION FROM TOM MANDENO IS IN RESPONSE TO THE HEALTHY RIVERS WAI ORA PROPOSED PLAN CHANGE 1. IT REQUESTS THE WAIKATO REGIONAL COUNCIL PROVIDE INFORMATION ON THE PRESENT WATER QUALITY OF THE WEST COAST CATCHMENTS STREAMS FROM PORT WAIKATO TO RAGLAN, AND HOW THEY COMPARE WITH THE WAI ORA TARGETS.

My wife Anna and I winter 4,000 sheep and 700 beef steers at Waikaretu. I was a Raglan County Councillor from 1983- 1989. For the past six years I have served as a WRC appointed West Coast Catchments Committee member. With the recent publicity surrounding the Healthy Rivers proposal I have been approached by land owners and ratepayers with many questions which are not easy to answer. There is considerable concern regarding the significant costs which include; fencing off the springs, waterways and wetlands and the planting and maintenance of the retired areas.

Newly planted native trees and flax on that retired land will require robust protection in back country catchments from wild pigs, deer and goats. Also, there will be on many properties the big cost of providing troughs for stock drinking water, reticulated over considerable distances. There is confusion surrounding the management of differing degrees of land slope and livestock classes. The grand-parenting of nitrogen leaching; especially for those of us on the hills who have never applied nitrogen is the subject of considerable debate.

The Wai Ora goal of swimmable water in our streams will be assisted by water quality research. People however do ask; who are the swimmers given that there is no public road access to the coast between Port Waikato and the Raglan Harbour? This spectacular coastline has its less obvious dangers; with tidal currents and rips, dangerous seas and unattractive debris washed ashore. However, what always amazes our overseas visitors – miles of beach and not a person to be seen!

Both farmers and their advisors would greatly value a cost/benefit analysis of the Wai Ora initiative. Bankers who will be requested by clients to provide funds for the significant costs associated with the Wai Ora proposals and insurance to meet reinstatement of any improvements in the event of a major flooding event will also see value in cost/benefit findings. All farmers have as their long term objective to leave their land better than it was. As predominantly small business operators we have to operate within our means as determined by the volatility of product prices and climatic factors.

The Waikato Regional Council Wai Ora initiative is a bold response to addressing the complex problem of water quality in the Waikato and Waipa Rivers. While the initial focus is on these rivers, it is expected that the West Coast Catchments, which cover 426,000 hectares (17% of the Waikato Region) will later come under the same rules.

In the heat of the contentious debate around Healthy Rivers what is being overlooked is the very significant progress made in the past. The WRC web site regularly monitors water quality for swimming at Sunset Beach (Port Waikato) and Ngarunui Beach (Raglan) - both are rated with the highest level of suitability for recreation. Council staff and residents can take credit for many years of planting large numbers of poplars and willows to protect stream banks and erosion prone hills and gullies. Voluntary planting and conservation work around the harbours and river mouths has achieved much. That West Coast farmers run a higher sheep ratio than those in other Waikato Regional Council zones is proof that the humble sheep is seen as an effective worker for a sustainable environment.

West Coast hill country sheep and beef systems are often less intensive than in other zones, with livestock grazed for longer periods in larger paddocks. Many of us have found that lower intensity and thus lower input cost, extensive farming, is to the advantage of both farm viability and environmental sustainability. Improved revenue from sheep farming would be a catalyst for more sheep and less cattle, thus a cost effective boost for the Wai Ora initiative.

The submission process and upcoming hearings provide an opportunity for discussion, changes and clarification of the rules as they stand at present. That such far reaching proposals were introduced based only on the casting vote of the Chair is certainly not a sufficient mandate. Councillors, Staff and Ratepayers will need to adopt a constructive attitude of good will and compromise to agree and embrace an amended Wai Ora proposed Plan Change 1. This foundation document will begin the eighty year project timeframe.

I wish to be heard in support of this submission, and on behalf of the residents and ratepayers I am appointed by your Council to represent.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Tom Mandeno', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Thomas Graham Mandeno JP